



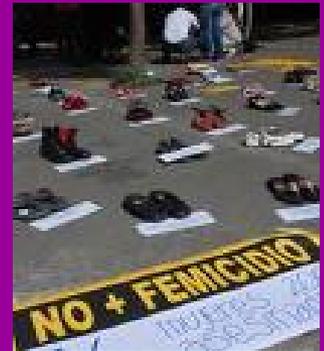
FEMICIDE IN CENTRAL AMERICA

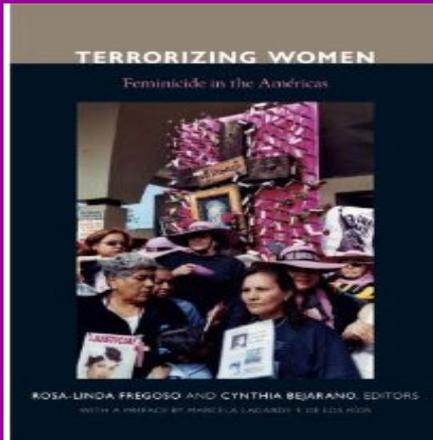
BY

JANICE JOSEPH

Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

josephj@stockton.edu





Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Americas



During the last decade, countries in Latin America have experienced an epidemic of woman-killing.

Bodies are everywhere: turning up in ditches on the side of the road, on the curbs of city streets, and in wooded ravines, often with signs of mutilation and rape.

The bodies have been found riddled with stab wounds and bite marks. Signs of rape have been detected, breasts mutilated, hair chopped off and faces disfigured.

DEFINITION OF FEMICIDE

Femicide

The killing of females because she is a female.

Feminists advocate for the term “femicide” because it removes the gender-neutral nature of homicide.

They believe that the term “homicide” demeans the woman’s experience and her relationship.

The term “femicide” indicates the true intent of the crime—killing a woman because of her gender.

DEFINITION OF FEMICIDE

It is:

- form of homicide which is gender based
- most serious and lethal form of violence against women
- sexist terrorism
- hate crime against women
- occurs in every sphere of life

TYPOLOGY OF FEMICIDE

Intimate Femicide - the killing of a woman by her partner. It is the most common form of femicide. This is the most common form.

Intra-familial femicide - committed by family members, such as honor killing, feticide, female Infanticide

Multicidal femicide - committed by serial murderers and mass murderers.

Systematic Femicide - during armed conflict when females are systematically slaughtered
As well as by gangs, organized crime syndicates,

TYPOLOGY OF FEMICIDE

KNOWN TO VICTIM

NOT KNOWN TO VICTIM

INTIMATE
FEMICIDE

INTRA-FAMILIAL
FEMICIDE

MULTICIDAL
FEMICIDE

SYSTEMATIC
FEMICIDE

CURRENT
PARTNERS

FORMER
PARTNERS

NON-INTIMATE
FAMILY MEMBERS

SERIAL
MURDERERS

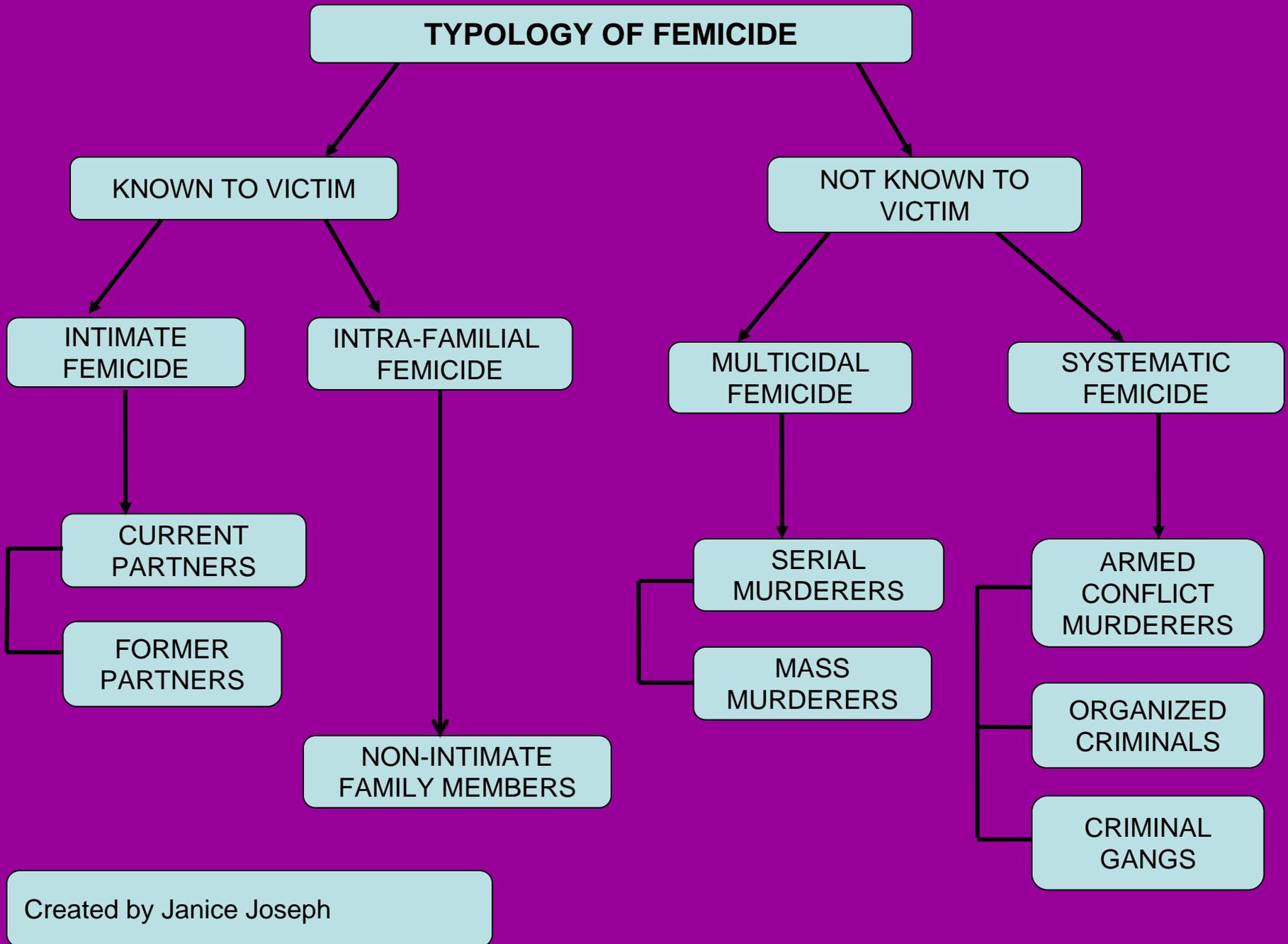
MASS
MURDERERS

ARMED
CONFLICT
MURDERERS

ORGANIZED
CRIMINALS

CRIMINAL
GANGS

Created by Janice Joseph





LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

History of conflict and authoritarianism

political unrest: Guatemala (1960-1996), El Salvador (1980-1992), and Nicaragua (1972-1991)

Displaced Population

Nicaraguans displaced in Honduras and Costa Rica; Salvadorans in Costa Rica and Mexico; Guatemalans in Mexico and as refugees in the United States.

Poverty and inequality

population live on less than two US dollars a day.

Family breakdown

Many families are single-parent households.
intra-family violence is common in Central America.

EXTENT OF FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

Guatemala

Last decade, over 5,000 women have been murdered in Guatemala, with population of less than 15 million.

Average two women are killed each day.

One of the highest female mortality rates in the world. About 800 women were killed in 2009 and 685 were killed 2010 and 705 in 2011.

Labeled one of the most dangerous place for a woman in Latin America.

EXTENT OF FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

Honduras

A femicide occurs every 48 hours.

Between 2002 and July 2009, an estimated 1,230 femicides.

From 2003 to 2007, the killing of women grew four times faster than that of men.

EXTENT OF FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

El Salvador

El Salvador has one of the world's highest "femicide."

In 2010, a woman was murdered every 13 hours.

In 2010, 477 women murdered with 193 of those murders occurring in the capital city alone.

640 femicides in 2011.

EXTENT OF FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

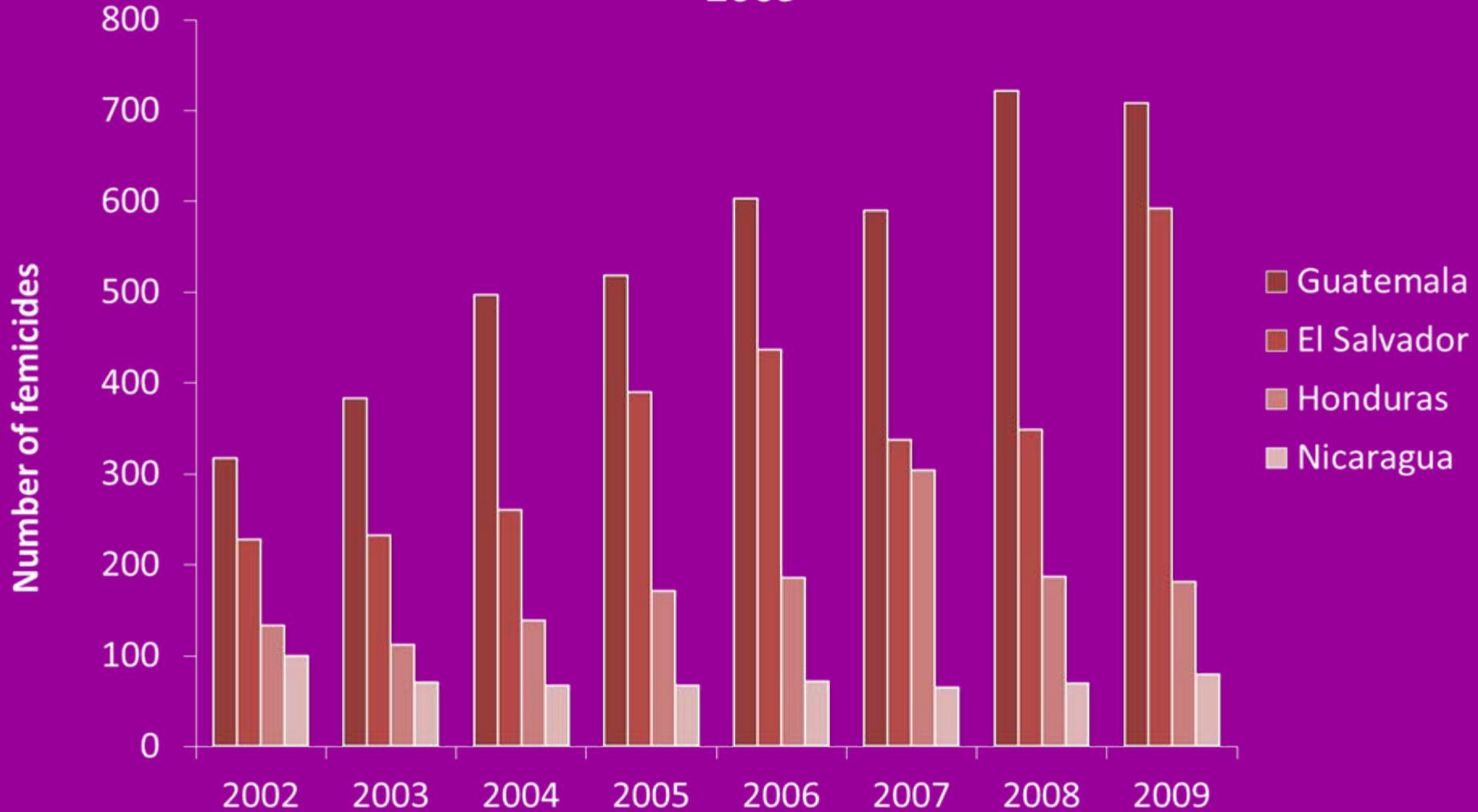
Nicaragua

There is serious under-recording.

Lack of indicators to classify crimes and thus differentiate between homicides in which women are victims and genuine femicide.

A research study by the Network of Women against Violence, identified 269 cases between 2000 and the first half of 2006.

Chart 1: Femicide in Four Countries in Central America 2002-2009



Source: Carbera , P.M. (2010). Intersecting Violences

Nature of the Femicides

Murders

- majority by firearms
- Physical assault
- Steel weapon
- Knives
- Strangulation
- often carried out with shocking brutality (such as dismembered bodies)

Location found

- Home
- Streets
- Wooded areas

MOTIVATION FOR THE FEMICIDES

Domestic Violence

20 and 30 percent of murdered women in Mexico and Central America are killed by their partners or relatives.

Organized Crime circuits

Human trafficking, most often victimizing women.

Gangs

MS 13 and the 18 heavily exert control over women in marginalized urban communities.

Killing a woman is also part of some gangs' initiation processes.

MOTIVATION FOR THE FEMICIDES

Acts of vengeance

Loan sharks will target a debtor' wife. It has become more common to seek violence against wives and daughters.

Misogynist Cleansing

Extreme level of violence against its victims, including mutilation, degrading words defacing the corpse, and evidence of sexual and/or other forms of torture.

RISK FACTORS FOR FEMICIDES IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Age

Trends show that victims are overwhelmingly young. The average age of femicide victims is between 15 and 25.

Poverty

Many of the victims are poor. Most jobs for women in Latin America are low-paying.

Marginalization

Many of the murdered women are from the most marginalized sectors of society.

Many are often constrained by traditional attitudes that subordinate them within the family and limit their mobility.

RISK FACTORS FOR FEMICIDES IN LATIN AMERICA

Migrant status

These women factory (maquila) often work overtime, which often means walking long distances at night, even if they are scared to do so.

Young women who leave rural homes (where they may already have experienced violence) for a job in the city are often exposed to violence.

Informal and Unprotected Forms of Labor

Such as street vendors, domestic servants, prostitutes, and mules' transporting drugs inside their bodies, in which violence practically comes with these jobs.

EXPLANATIONS FOR FEMICIDES IN LATIN AMERICA

Feminist Arguments:

- unequal power relations between men and women.
- Mechanism of control and domination .
- Intersections between gender, sexuality, nationhood, race and economic exploitation.
- Discrimination and violence against women are interlinked.
- Form of deeply entrenched sexism.

EXPLANATIONS FOR FEMICIDES IN LATIN AMERICA

Socio-cultural Environment

Machista cultural attitudes are reinforced in newspapers, commercials, songs, and television which reproduce myths justifying violence against women.

A continuum of violence

Culmination of a continuum of violence in cultures violence against women are considered socially acceptable by both men and women.

EXPLANATIONS FOR FEMICIDES IN LATIN AMERICA

Legacy of the Civil Wars

Part of the violence can be attributed to the legacy of civil wars in the region.

In a gruesome show of power, some of the femicides are brutal, similar to what occurred during the civil war:

Victims are tortured, disfigured, and dismembered, abandoned them in ditches, trash cans, or garbage bags.

EXPLANATIONS FOR FEMICIDES IN LATIN AMERICA

Backlash against women

The increase in the number of femicides can also be linked to women's empowerment.

As a backlash against women who have stepped outside the 'safe' domestic sphere to earn an independent living

Femicide is the result of a violent clash between rising "feminismo" and ancient "machismo."

RESPONSES TO FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

Legal Response

El Salvador and Honduras have all passed laws making violence against women a crime, yet the laws are not enforced.

Legislation

In April 2008 the Guatemalan Congress approved a Law Against Femicide and other forms of violence against women.

Penalty of 20 to 50 years imprisonment without parole for femicide.

RESPONSES TO FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

Criminal Justice Response

In most Latin America, there are very few mechanisms to address gender-based violence in general.

Law enforcement officials often view these murders as spontaneous or accidental acts and do not take appropriate actions to investigate them.

They sometimes assume that women who are murdered are also either criminals or prostitutes.

RESPONSES TO FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

Criminal Justice Response

Dysfunctional judicial system with insensitive prosecutors and judges.

Consequently, most of the femicides are not investigated and when they are, very few perpetrators are brought to justice.

In Guatemala, 70 per cent of murders of women are not investigated and no arrests has been made in 97 per cent of cases that were investigated.

RESPONSES TO FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

Impunity

- Intimidation : threats buy easy access to "a weak criminal justice system"
- Corruption - murderers use bribes politicians and members of the criminal justice system.
- Lack of policy and mechanism to address gender-based violence.
- Climate of passivity and unwillingness from the authorities to investigate the crimes.

RESPONSES TO FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

Inadequate , insensitive, and prejudiced responses by service providers contribute to the patriarchal structure and facilitates the normalization of femicide.

- The sensationalist treatment of femicides by the press, newspapers, radio and television, devaluing the problem, making the victim invisible.

Lack of resources and proper training.

Systematic absence of punishment causes more femicides.

RESPONSES TO FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

International Community

For a very long time, this crime was invisible to the international community.

Although in 2007 the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on the Central American governments, the EU institutions and EU Member State governments to take meaningful actions towards eradicating discrimination and violence against women, punishing killers and strengthening legal systems, little has been done since.

In 2007, Congress passed the measure known as H.RES.100. It is an effort by a large bipartisan group of representatives to try to end "femicide" in Guatemala and elsewhere in Central and South America.

RESPONSES TO FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

International Community

In recent years, human rights organizations such as:

Amnesty International
International Federation of Human Rights,
Centre for Justice and International Law, and the
UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women

have undertaken official missions, produced research reports, and supported women's organizations' struggle for justice.

Women politicians in Central America, in collaboration with women's organizations, have spoken out at international Hearings on femicides in Latin America.

GENERAL SITUATION

The general devaluing of women in Latin America is inscribed in cultural and legal codes.

Lack of accountability for them somehow further validates the idea that women deserve the treatment they receive. Continued marginalization of women.

Within mainstream culture, media, politics and the legal system, femicide continues to be viewed primarily as a personal, individualized issue in Latin America.

Many of those involved such military officers, drug traffickers etc. , remain outside the law.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Zero tolerance

The government s should legislate that gender-based violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

States have yet to fulfill their obligation of due diligence in the prevention, investigation, legal prosecution, sanction and reparation of femicide.

Lack of political will.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Collection of data on violence against women

There is little data on femicides in Central America.

Necessary resources should be provided to implement a standard system for collecting data and compiling statistics on violence against women and girls for use by Law and Justice Sector agencies and other relevant bodies.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Training for Investigators

Police investigators, crime scene investigation officials and forensic experts should receive intensive and ongoing training in investigative techniques.

Such training should refer to international standards and expertise including on how to detect, document and investigate cases of gender-based violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The general devaluing of women in Guatemala, especially in rural areas, inscribed in cultural and legal codes.

In the long term, only real social and cultural change will end the long and terrible history of discrimination and violence against women and girls just because they are female.